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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 001827

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EI](#) [NIPP](#)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: REISS CONSULTS WITH IRISH ON
NEXT STEPS; AMB RAISES SECURITY OF U.S. INTERESTS

REF: A. LONDON 9369

[1](#)B. DUBLIN 1811

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Kenny for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) The President's Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, Mitchell B. Reiss, traveled to Dublin on December 16 to discuss next steps in the peace process with Irish officials.

Brendan Scannell, DFA Director of the Anglo-Irish Division, expressed views similar to those heard in London (reftel). Scannell talked about how close parties had come to a deal and praised USG efforts, especially the President's telephone calls to Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley. Scannell expressed the view that a deal is still possible and contacts are continuing; however, he indicated that everyone needed the Christmas holiday to recover and to consider next steps. Scannell talked about differences among the parties over verification (photos), the need to specify more precisely the role of the independent observers called for in the draft, and the problem of criminality, which was brought to a head when the IRA statement varied from the draft agreement. Scannell said that the Irish government would need an explicit commitment from Sinn Fein that it would forego criminality. When Ambassador Kenny asked whether the IRA deliberately left out any reference to criminality in order to give itself some negotiating room, Scannell agreed that this was likely part of the reasoning.

[1](#)2. (C) Dr. Reiss also met Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, and MoJ Secretary General Sean Aylward. Aylward and McDowell evinced a similar fatigue and the need among all parties to use the Christmas break to cool down. While they agreed with DFA's assessment of outstanding issues, they were more caustic in their discussion of Sinn Fein. Minister McDowell is from the Progressive Democrats (PD), the junior partner in government and the party that immediately took to the floor of parliament when the IRA statement was published. PD demanded an end to criminality as part of a comprehensive deal. He thus was more openly critical of Sinn Fein and the IRA during his meeting with Reiss. During the meeting, news of the conviction of the "Colombia Three" came in; unlike later statements from the Foreign Minister, McDowell and Aylward shed no tears at the news that the three IRA members were convicted and given a 17-year sentence by Colombian courts.

[1](#)3. (C) In addition to discussion of Northern Ireland issues, Ambassador Kenny raised USG concerns about the safety of American interests in Ireland, including the Embassy. Aylward said he took security of U.S. installations seriously and would look into the matter, at the same time noting the difficulty of protecting the large number of U.S. businesses in Ireland. Aylward and the Ambassador discussed their efforts to reach out to the Muslim community. The Ambassador noted USG satisfaction that the lower house of parliament finally passed counter-terrorism legislation (ref B). When passed by the Senate, the legislation will give Ireland better legal instruments with which to pursue terrorists.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The Irish threw their heart and soul into the peace process, beginning with Leeds. Their fatigue and discouragement was apparent during Reiss' visit, as was their commitment to continue to push for the deal. If a deal is to be cut before the UK parliamentary elections, all pieces would need to be in place by the end of March, in the GOI view. At the moment, Sinn Fein has hurt its standing with the GOI. The Prime Minister is taking serious political heat because of massive opposition to including the release of the killers of Garda (police officer) Gerry McCabe in a comprehensive settlement. McCabe's killers were reportedly "freelancing" IRA members. At the same time, Progressive Democrats have gotten the government to agree that a clear end to criminality is a necessary precursor to any deal. News of the conviction of the Colombia Three certainly did not help Sinn Fein either, and Gerry Adams' remarks to the effect that no republicans were criminals were deemed absurd and disingenuous at best. That said, Prime Minister Ahern wants a deal and needs a deal. He is already focused on the 2007 election campaign, hoping to go into that election saying that he helped put a comprehensive deal in place. END COMMENT.

[1](#)5. (U) Special Envoy Reiss has cleared this telegram.
KENNY